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RED CROSS MEASURES FOR THE PREVENTION OF DISASTERS

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Should I take a text for this short address upon Red Cross measures for the prevention of disasters, I would select the last words of paragraph 5 of the charter by which Congress incorporated the American Red Cross and defined its duties.

The entire paragraph reads, "And to continue and carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply the same in mitigating sufferings caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great calamities." Then comes the duty to which I wish particularly to refer: "And to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same."

Therefore, the Red Cross was created not simply to provide a pound of cure, but to seek also for the far more valuable ounce of prevention.

No more serious disaster can occur to any country than the disaster of war. If, in its primary purpose, the Red Cross was organized to mitigate at such time the suffering of the wounded as a pound of cure, is it not true that in broadening the field of its beneficent service so as to render sympathetic and generous aid when calamities o'ertake our sister nations, it all unconsciously is providing an ounce for the prevention of war and laying a foundation stone in the temple of peace?

In a letter lately received by the Red Cross from the Secretary of State, Mr. Knox says: "On the occasions when the Department of State has brought foreign disasters to the attention of the American Red Cross its prompt and efficient action has always been most gratifying and should be a source of pride to our countrymen. In these days when the spirit of humanity and helpfulness more and more ignores boundaries, international aid in case of foreign disasters is especially appropriate and is of very real value, I believe, in

promoting that international good will with the fostering of which the diplomacy of the United States is so much engaged."

Let me speak briefly of another field of preventive work that the Red Cross has aided in this winter. Early in February the State Department inquired of the Red Cross if it could provide an expert bacteriologist for an international commission asked for by the Chinese Government, for the study and extermination of the pneumonic plague that is raging in Manchuria. After consulting with some of the most prominent physicians in this country, and with Mr. Dean Worcester, of the Philippine Commission, the Red Cross was most fortunate in securing the services of Dr. Richard P. Strong, head of the Bureau of Science in Manila, and of his assistant, Dr. Oscar Teague. Funds were cabled to Dr. Strong so that they could start immediately, which they did by the first available steamer, going via Pekin to Mukden, the center of the plague district. There they established a laboratory in connection with the plague hospital, and for six weeks, taking their lives in their hands, they have been studying this deadly pestilence so as to be of practical assistance to the international commission when it meets this month. We here, in the midst of what modern sanitation and hygiene have given us, can little realize the horrors of a plague-ravaged country nor that our own safety means eternal vigilance, and the courageous labors of such men as these.

When some serious disaster occurs like the terrible factory fire the other day in New York City, by which a large number of lives are lost at once, a thrill of horror sweeps over the country, but how little thought is given to the fact that 2,450 of our miners are killed each year and 6,772 injured, that the railroads claim some 3,000 dead and 64,000 injured. Statistics in regard to industrial accidents are neither complete nor accurate in the United States, but it is believed that five hundred thousand persons are killed or incapacitated yearly. Is the Red Cross wrong in regarding this as a national calamity, especially when it is estimated that sixty-six per cent of these accidents are due to negligence on the part of the employers or the employees?

In Surgeon General O'Reilly's preface for the Red Cross first-aid text-book, prepared by Major Charles Lynch, of the Army Medical Service, he says: "Notwithstanding the many excellent works already in existence on first-aid instruction, none of the

writers, so far as I know, has given much thought to teaching the prevention of accidents. While this subject is necessarily treated rather briefly here, at least enough is said to call attention to the importance of prevention as contrasted with cure, and for this reason it seems to me peculiarly appropriate that this book should have the endorsement of the Red Cross, as the beneficent mission of that society, like that of the good physician in treating of diseases, should be to go deeply into causes, and their responsibility for the physical sufferings of humanity, rather than to resort solely to palliative measures."

Furthermore, in the industrial edition of this text-book, which has been translated into Polac, Slovac, Lithuanian and Italian, and which is dedicated to The Industrial Army of the United States of America, many pages are devoted to suggestions for the prevention of accidents.

Those for railroad employees, for example, propose the offering of instruction in the theory and practice of safety in railroading by the company, and advocate safety appliances, reasonable hours, common care on the part of the employees, etc. For passengers and others a list of "nevers" is provided. "Never to cross a railway at a grade crossing before making sure that no trains are approaching." "Never jump on or off cars in motion," and finally, "Never forget that carelessness on your part in regard to these precautions not only endangers your life but the happiness and welfare of those most dear to you."

Moreover, the Red Cross has had over sixty thousand of these precautions printed on posters and distributed to railroads, and over thirty thousand of a like nature for use in trolley cars.

In the mining section of the text-books thirteen "don'ts" are given for miners. "Don't forget to sound the roof after each blast." "Don't fire two holes at once," etc. Eight for the laborer, such as "Don't walk haulage roads; go the manway." Eight for runners, such as "Don't ride on the side of the car." Three for drivers, and three for trappers or door boys.

In the section devoted to injuries of the factory and workshop various precautions against accidents are provided: "Notify the engineer before doing any work upon the main line shafting, pulleys or belts while the engine is stopped," etc. Precautions against accidents from electricity, such as "A man should not work on a wire

or conductor with arms exposed"; "in handling circuits of over 115 volts use, if possible, only one hand, keeping the other in the pocket or behind the back," etc.

The Red Cross employs two physicians, one who devotes his time to the organizing of first-aid courses among miners and who accompanies the rescue cars of the Government Bureau of Mines; the other who devotes his time to the organizing of first-aid courses among railroad men, and who is attached to the Red Cross First-aid Instruction Car. Both these men, Dr. Shields and Dr. Glasgow, make a special point of dwelling upon the great importance of precaution to prevent accidents.

In thus providing instruction in first-aid for the great industrial army of our country, a still further act of prevention takes place—the prevention of serious consequences because of the ignorant treatment of the injured. The celebrated German surgeon, Dr. Von Esmark, most truly said "The fate of a wounded man depends upon into whose hands he first falls."

Thus, briefly, I have given you some of the measures the American Red Cross has undertaken to prevent disasters. Had you been at a miners' first-aid competition held by the Red Cross in Northern Pennsylvania, you would have seen a mine disaster illustrated in a most dramatic way. A facsimile of the mine was built above ground, the miners busily at work with their pickaxes, the flash of the explosion, the falling roof, the groaning, burned and injured men, and then the pathetic cry of the Welsh miner who came first to their assistance, "Come quick! There's a man hurted!" A cry that goes to the heart of the Red Cross and to which it seeks to respond—that cry for the prevention of human suffering and the conservation of human life.